

Administration of Barack Obama, 2011

The President's News Conference With President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa of Mexico

March 3, 2011

President Obama. Good afternoon. I am delighted to welcome my friend and partner, President Calderon, back to the White House. I want to discuss our meeting today and then address the situation in Libya.

President Calderon was last here, along with the First Lady, Senora Zavala, for a very productive state visit last spring, a visit that reflected the new era of respect and cooperation and partnership between our two countries. We've since worked together as global partners at the G-20 summits in Toronto and Seoul and at the APEC summit in Yokohama. And I very much appreciate President Calderon being here today to deepen the cooperation that is so essential to the prosperity and security of both of our countries.

Of course, the relationship between the United States and Mexico isn't measured just in the partnership between two Presidents. It's evident every day in the strong bonds between our two societies. It's the thousands of people who work together, at every level—Federal, State, and community levels—to keep our citizens safe, to keep our economies growing. It's the tens of thousands of students and teachers and researchers in exchanges between our schools and our universities.

It's the 1 million people who cross our shared border every day—tourists and businesspeople—sustaining one of the largest trading relationships in the world. And it's our families and our friends, the many Americans living in Mexico, and the tens of millions of Mexican Americans who make outstanding contributions to this country every single day.

As I said, we're also global partners. As part of the G-20, we're advancing the global economic recovery, and I look forward to visiting Mexico when President Calderon hosts the G-20 next year. Together, we've responded to the earthquake in Haiti, and we're securing the world's vulnerable nuclear materials. I especially want to commend President Calderon for Mexico's successful leadership of the Cancun conference, including progress towards a green fund that he himself helped to get started and champion and which will help developing countries adapt to climate change.

Most recently, our Governments have spoken out forcefully for the human rights of the Libyan people, and Mexico played a leading role at the United Nations in suspending Libya from the Human Rights Council.

President Calderon, this not only reflects our commitment to the shared values of freedom and justice and rule of law. It's also another example of Mexico's global leadership, as you said in your address to our Congress last year, that "Mexico is standing tall" and ready to take its "rightful place in the world."

It is this appreciation of the great bonds between Americans and Mexicans and the values and responsibilities that we hold in common that allowed us to make progress once again today.

We're working to expand the trade that creates jobs for our peoples. Remember, Mexico is the second largest market for American exports. It supports some 1 million American jobs. And our exports to Mexico are growing faster than they are with the rest of the world.

So we're moving ahead with plans for a 21st-century border so people and goods can cross securely and efficiently. We're working to coordinate and streamline regulations and get rid of unnecessary trade barriers to make it easier to do business together. We're making new investments in clean energy partnerships, including green buildings and smart grid technologies. And based on negotiations so far, I'm hopeful that we can conclude an agreement by the end of the year to develop new sources of energy in the Gulf of Mexico.

I'm especially pleased to announce that, after nearly 20 years, we found—finally have found a clear path to resolving the dispute over trucking between our two countries. I thank President Calderon and his team, as well as my Transportation Secretary, Ray LaHood, and our U.S. Trade Representative, Ambassador Ron Kirk, for reaching this proposed agreement. I look forward to consulting with Congress and moving forward in a way that strengthens the safety of cross-border trucking, lifts tariffs on billions of dollars of U.S. goods, expands our exports to Mexico, and creates job on both sides of the border.

We're also deepening our cooperation against the drug cartels that threaten both our peoples. As I've said before, President Calderon and the Mexican people have shown extraordinary courage in the fight for their country. Tens of thousands of Mexicans—innocent citizens and dedicated security forces—have lost their lives. I have reaffirmed to President Calderon that in this cause, Mexico has a full partner with the United States. Because whether they live in Texas or Tijuana, our people have a right to be safe in their communities.

So we are continuing to speed up the delivery of equipment and training that our Mexican partners need to keep up this fight. As President Calderon cracks down on money laundering in Mexico, we're putting unprecedented pressure on cartels and their finances here in the United States. And we thank our Mexican partners for their close cooperation following the murder of one of our immigration and customs agents, Special Agent Jaime Zapata.

I reiterated that the United States accepts our shared responsibility for the drug violence. So to combat the southbound flow of guns and money, we are screening all southbound rail cargo, seizing many more guns bound for Mexico, and we are putting more gunrunners behind bars. And as part of our new drug control strategy, we are focused on reducing the demand for drugs through education, prevention, and treatment.

We have also discussed immigration, an issue on which both countries have responsibilities. As I told President Calderon, I remain deeply committed to fixing our broken immigration system with comprehensive reform that continues to secure our borders, enforces our laws, including against businesses that break the law, and requiring accountability from undocumented workers. And we have to conduct this debate in a way that upholds our values as a nation of both laws and immigrants. So I'm eager to work with Republicans and Democrats to get this reform done, which is vital to the U.S. economy.

Finally, I'm looking forward to receiving insights from the President as I prepare for my trip to Latin America this month, which will be an opportunity to strengthen our security cooperation throughout the region.

Mr. President, thank you for your partnership and for deepening the bonds between our countries, which only grow stronger each time that we meet.

Now, before I turn it over to President Calderon, I want to address the situation in Libya.

The United States, and the entire world, continues to be outraged by the appalling violence against the Libyan people. The United States is helping to lead an international effort

to deter further violence, put in place unprecedented sanctions to hold the Qadhafi Government accountable, and support the aspirations of the Libyan people.

We are also responding quickly to the urgent humanitarian needs that are developing. Tens of thousands of people from many different countries are fleeing Libya, and we commend the Governments of Tunisia and Egypt for their response, even as they go through their own political transitions. I have, therefore, approved the use of U.S. military aircraft to help move Egyptians who have fled to the Tunisian border to get back home to Egypt. I've authorized USAID to charter additional civilian aircraft to help people from other countries find their way home, and we're supporting the efforts of international organizations to evacuate people as well.

I've also directed USAID to send humanitarian assistance teams to the Libyan border so that they can work with the United Nations, NGOs, and other international partners inside Libya to address the urgent needs of the Libyan people.

Going forward, we will continue to send a clear message: The violence must stop. Muammar Qadhafi has lost the legitimacy to lead, and he must leave. Those who perpetrate violence against the Libyan people will be held accountable. And the aspirations of the Libyan people for freedom, democracy, and dignity must be met.

President Calderon.

President Calderon. Thank you very much, President Obama. Thank you so much for your hospitality. Ladies and gentlemen of the media, good afternoon.

President Barack Obama and I have held a very valuable conversation concerning the status of our bilateral cooperation and many aspects of this. As always, it has been very satisfying for me to see that we agree on the basic principle of coresponsibility. And I thank you, Mr. President, for your invitation to hold this working visit here in the city of Washington.

Some of the things that we evaluated is that our Governments have progressed substantially on many of these aspects. The results of our cooperation in some aspects—unprecedented cooperation—have been translated into concrete examples, such as the opening last year in 2010 of the three first new border crossings over the past 10 years.

My state visit last year, as you mentioned, Mr. President, and the ongoing meetings that we have held and that we will continue to have in the immediate future have been especially important to our bilateral relationship so as to generate confidence—the confidence that we have today. We know today that we could—need to continue to be personally involved so as to ensure that the objectives that we trace are reached, such as those dealt with today. And we have broached the following subjects today.

First, internationally—at the international level, we have reiterated that Mexico and the United States are authentic, strategic partners, as can be seen by our joint work on the global and regional agendas. We have achieved substantive progress, as mentioned by President Obama, in matters such as climate change during the Conference of the Parties number 16. And now we have made efforts to make the agreements reached in Cancun operational and as well as to adopt the next steps for the Conference of the Parties number 17 in Durban.

Both countries will also play an important role within the G-20, a mechanism that Mexico will be presiding over next year and in which we have reached important agreements for stability and recovery of the international economy. And in this context I would like to congratulate President Obama for the visit that he will be making to Brazil, Chile, and El

Salvador in a few weeks' time. Greater dialogue among the United States and Latin American nations will always be beneficial to the hemisphere and beneficial not just for Latin American countries, but also for the United States.

The specific case of Central America, in addition—here we've agreed to continue to work with the U.S. Government so as to achieve more determined cooperation in support of regional efforts to strengthen the rule of law and to fight transnational organized crime.

Secondly, in terms of the border, both President Obama and I agree that we must turn this era—area into the land of opportunities and not of conflict. Last year we adopted a declaration on the administration of a 21st-century border which we want both for the United States and Mexico. And since then, the bilateral executive committee entrusted with that implementation has agreed to a plan of action in addition to issuing a joint declaration to prevent border violence, so as to enable us to avoid tragic events such as those that we've seen on both sides of the border.

Thirdly, in terms of immigration, President Obama has always recognized—invariably recognized—the contributions of immigrants to the economy and society of the United States, and I recognize—recognize and value his clear and determined support for the adoption of a comprehensive migratory reform in this country, as well as his firm commitment to the human and civil rights of communities, regardless of their point of origin. I've expressed to him my concern for the proliferation of local initiatives that are against the interests or the rights of immigrant communities.

Fourth, in terms of competitiveness, Mexico has a regional perspective. The United States and Mexico can and must make the most of the comparative advantages that make us unique as a region and that would enable us to convert, to turn North America, in its entirety, into the most competitive region of the world. I am convinced that together we can achieve this.

The North American Free Trade Agreement was a great step forward for the commercial—trade integration of the region. It generated hundreds of thousands, even millions, of jobs in the United States and in Mexico. And we are ready to work to deepen and to make the most of this relationship.

We must work to efficiently—to take advantage of the relative abundance of capital in the United States with the labor manpower available in Mexico through productive actions, investments in our countries, as well as the access that is secure, orderly, and legal of national workers from Mexico in the U.S. market.

Our Governments—something that is very important to us—have today reached an agreement, an agreement to solve our differences with respect to cross-border cargo trucking that had existed for many years. As I said, this has existed for a long time despite the fact that we had—that the integrated system for transportation existed and benefited both countries. It was strengthening our competitiveness and it generated jobs and it existed since 1994 when we agreed on the NAFTA.

In this sense, Mexico will be suspended on a—will be phasing out duty reprisals after noncompliance of the United States—of the free trade agreement of North America by the United States and will be ending—and as a result of this, will be furthering liberalization of cargo transportation. The objective of my Government has always been to reach a solution that's mutually acceptable in this field.

And fifth, in the chapter of security, both Governments have taken on our positions as coresponsible parties in the fight against transnational organized crime. This is a paradigm change in our relationship. And today we have reached increased levels of exchange of information that are unheard of in the past. I would like to thank President Obama for the clarity with which he speaks of the effects that the consumption of drugs has on his country, as well as the illegal traffic of weapons and of monies into Mexican territory. I know that together we can achieve ever greater results.

Last year was the year where we had the greatest number of achievements in the capture of the number of criminals. Unprecedented number of criminals were caught, and this is the result of the increase of the institutional capacity of our agencies as well as international cooperation in terms of information and intelligence.

I also truly value the clear effort of the United States through transfer of equipment and training programs to our efforts—added to our efforts of institution—institutional efforts. And this I am sure will further our efforts tremendously. And I thank you for your support there, Mr. President. And I also am grateful for the clarity with which President Obama has recognized the great sacrifices that the Mexican society has had to make in view of organized crime and our fight of drug trafficking.

In the fight for the security of Mexico, thousands of military officers and members of the police force have died in Mexico. They fall in the line of duty. And to these deaths we add the death of Agent Jaime Zapata from the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency of the United States. And I would like to add my deepest condolences to his relatives, to the people, and Government of Mexico in view of his death—Government of the United States in view of his death.

I would like to tell you that the suspected perpetrator of his murder and his gang has been arrested, and we hope to bring them to justice. His death must urge us to continue to work together so as to ensure a prosperous and peaceful future for our region.

Ladies and gentlemen, today I'd like to say that I thank the hospitality of President Obama, and I would reiterate my trust, my confidence in the Government and institutions of this country. This country is a good friend to Mexico, as is President Obama. This opportunity represents for me a chance to strongly renew our efforts and to redouble our efforts to accomplish the security that our peoples deserve.

At the same time, I would like to congratulate President Obama for the leadership that he has shown in the problem of concern to all of us in North Africa, heading up the responsible efforts of the people and Government of the United States to quickly find solutions to this problem.

Mr. President, once again, thank you ever so much for your hospitality, the friendship that you have always shown to Mexico, the responsibility that your Government, your administration has unprecedentedly taken on in the subjects—the issues that are of common interest to us. Our bilateral relationship, my friends, does not only have a huge impact on the lives of Mexicans and Americans, but today it's taken on with increasing strength and clarity and coordination by both of our Governments.

Once again, thank you for your personal commitment, the cooperation, and coresponsibility of your Government. We will continue to work together and harder to achieve the prosperity of both the Mexican and U.S. peoples. Thank you very much.

National Football League/Situation in Libya/Safety of U.S. Agents Working in Mexico

President Obama. I think we're going to take one question each. Ben Feller, AP [Associated Press].

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I have a question for both Presidents, and in your case, sir, I suppose it's a classic two-parter. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. With a follow up.

President Obama. With a follow up? So making it a three-parter? [*Laughter*]

Q. Thank you, sir. On Libya, I wanted to follow up on your comments. Colonel Qadhafi is vowing to fight to the end, and in the meantime, the people of his country are dying. Now, I know that you've admonished the press corps about impatience, and I know that the international community and the United States have taken several steps and you've named many of those today. But I'm wondering while this is happening, if you fear this is headed for a bloody stalemate. And more specifically, is a no-fly zone something that you're actively considering? And can you talk about what you see is your broader doctrine for military intervention in a crisis like this?

The other topic is something that is quite different but does matter to millions of Americans. The National Football League is on the brink of a complete shutdown as of tonight over a labor dispute. Obviously, that's an economic issue for cities but also something that a lot of people just care about. And I'm wondering if it's something that you'd be willing to personally intervene on. And if not, why not?

President Calderon, sir, I was wondering your thoughts on an issue that's come up about potentially arming U.S. agents in Mexico; it's come up here in the U.S. Attorney General Holder has raised it as at least something that should be considered. I'm wondering if you will consider it, and if that came up with President Obama.

Thank you both.

President Obama. All right. Let me deal with football first. [*Laughter*] You've got owners, most of whom are worth close to a billion dollars. You got players who are making millions of dollars. My working assumption at a time when people are having to cut back, compromise, and worry about making the mortgage and paying for their kids' college education is, is that the two parties should be able to work it out without the President of the United States intervening.

I'm a big football fan, but I also think that for an industry that's making \$9 billion a year in revenue, they can figure out how to divide it up in a sensible way and be true to their fans who are the ones who obviously allow for all the money that they're making. So my expectation and hope is, is that they will resolve it without me intervening, because it turns out I've got a lot of other stuff to do. [*Laughter*]

With respect to Libya, I think you asked about, sort of, do I have a doctrine. My approach throughout the convulsions that have swept through the Middle East is: number one, no violence against citizens; number two, that we stand for freedom and democracy. And in the situation in Libya, what you've seen is: number one, violence against citizens and the active urging of violence against unarmed citizens by Qadhafi; and number two, you have seen with great clarity that he has lost legitimacy with his people.

And so let me just be very unambiguous about this. Colonel Qadhafi needs to step down from power and leave. That is good for his country. That is good for his people. It's the right thing to do.

Those around him have to understand that violence that they perpetrate against innocent civilians will be monitored and they will be held accountable for it. And so to the extent that they are making calculations in their own minds about which way history is moving, they should know history is moving against Colonel Qadhafi and that their support for him and their willingness to carry out orders that are direct violence against citizens is something that ultimately they will be held accountable for.

With respect to our willingness to engage militarily, what I've instructed the Department of Defense, as well as our State Department and all those who are involved in international affairs, to examine is a full range of options. I don't want us hamstrung. I want us to be making our decisions based on what's going to be best for the Libyan people, in consultation with the international community.

And we are doing that not just here in the United States within our own agencies, but we're also doing it in consultation with NATO. We have already engineered the most rapid and forceful set of sanctions that have ever been applied internationally. We started unilaterally freezing \$30 billion worth of assets, imposing severe sanctions against those in the Libyan Government who've been carrying out some of these crimes. And as a consequence of that leadership, what we've seen is, I think, broad-based mobilization around the international community.

You are right that there is a danger of a stalemate that over time could be bloody, and that is something that we are obviously considering. So what I want to make sure of is that the United States has full capacity to act potentially rapidly if the situation deteriorated in such a way that you had a humanitarian crisis on our hands or a situation in which civilians were—defenseless civilians were finding themselves trapped and in great danger.

I think it's very important for us to do this in consultation, though, with the international community. One of the extraordinary successes of Egypt was the full ownership that the Egyptian people felt for that transformation. That has served the Egyptian people well. It serves U.S. interests well. We did not see anti-American sentiment arising out of that movement in Egypt precisely because they felt that we hadn't tried to engineer or impose a particular outcome, but rather they owned it.

The same is happening in Tunisia. And I think that the region will be watching carefully to make sure we're on the right side of history, but also that we are doing so as a member of the world community and being willing to act on behalf of these values, but doing so in a way that takes all the various equities into account.

So just to put, sort of, the final point on it, we are looking at every option that's out there. In addition to the nonmilitary actions that we've taken, I want to make sure that those full range of options are available to me. Some of them may end up being humanitarian. I mean, the biggest priority that we have right now is you've got tens of thousand people—tens of thousands of people who are gathered at a border, and we've got to make sure that they can get home.

And that's why we—we're using some of our military aircrafts in addition to civilian aircrafts to help on that front. There may be situations in which Qadhafi is hunkered down in

his compound, but the economy or food distribution systems in Tripoli, for example, start deteriorating, and we're going to have to figure out how do we potentially get food in there.

So there are a whole range of options, military and nonmilitary, that we're examining, and we'll be making these decisions based on what's best for the Libyan people and how can we make sure that we're minimizing the harm to innocent civilians during this process.

Throughout all this, we will continue to send the clear message that it's time for Qadhafi to go.

Q. And a no-fly zone is one of those options still under consideration?

President Obama. That is one of the options that we would be looking at.

President Calderon. First, in terms of Libya, I recognize and applaud the efforts undertaken by President Obama, as I said previously, to seek a solution in line with international law for this situation. For Mexico, it's absolutely clear that we cannot—it's not possible that civilians be massacred and not go punished, using weapons that are for the exclusive use of war. We must do everything that we can to avoid or stop that massacre.

Mexico indeed has presented a resolution within the framework of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. And in this Libya has been sanctioned by the Commission. And we are of course taking part, insofar as we are able to, in the search for a solution to this problem.

I believe that today it is—problem to revalue the principles and the values of human rights anywhere in the world—the principles and values that we recognize and value. We have them in North American society and people, in terms of that we condemn any act of violence against people where people are risking their lives, in terms of the use of weapons.

We condemn any act of violence against these people, and we believe that people must have the best conditions to guarantee their work, including their personal security. And in this effort I know that we have the support of different agencies of the Government of the United States who have contributed enormously to the solution of the problems that we are facing together under the principle of shared responsibility that we are consolidating.

I must nonetheless clarify that there are very important legal restrictions in this matter in Mexico, as is probably the case in other countries, and most likely the United States, with respect to the actions of foreign agents in Mexican land. The law does not allow agents of the United States or of any other country to take part in tasks involving justice enforcement in our territory. As a result, they cannot carry weapons or undertake operational tasks. Their functions, in line with our treaties, are limited to the exchange of information and technical assistance to support Mexican authorities in these tasks. So there's an important legal restriction that exists.

But it's very clear for me as well that we must find the way of enhancing the level of protection of any and all agents who are acting within the framework of the law against crime. And of course, we are deeply analyzing alternatives for this and in dialogue with the Mexican Congress who is the party that has the final word—the final say on this matter.

And finally on the issue of football, I'm not an expert; my wife is, though. And I will ask her about it. I'm sure that she's very concerned about the situation. But allow me to say that football is very important for many Mexicans.

[*At this point, President Calderon spoke in English.*]

So, for that, whatever you need, with the exception of money, you can count on us.
[Laughter]

But fix that, please.

President Obama. I will say that at the state dinner, the First Lady of Mexico seemed quite excited to see Mark Sanchez there. Yes. I don't know if that was of concern to you.
[Laughter]

President Calderon. No. It's okay. Actually—

[*President Calderon spoke in Spanish and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.*]

You've already thrown the coin—flipped the coin in a Jets game—Mrs. Zavala did.

[*President Calderon called on a reporter, but the remarks were not translated.*]

Mexico-U.S. Border Security and Drug Control Cooperation/Safety of U.S. Agents Working in Mexico/Investigation Into the Death of Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agent Jaime Zapata

Q. Taking advantage of the moment and continuing the subject matter, I'm not going to ask many questions, but I will be very concrete. First, directly for President Obama, the second amendment of the United States Constitution allows American citizens to carry weapons and this principle is defended. However, President Calderon has said that this law in Congress—that this could actually go against U.S. agents, and this has happened. So, President Obama, you—in Mexico we have the veto, the power of veto. I don't know how far you have the ability to veto that law that has been approved. And if you have that responsibility, why don't you do so, sir? How long are we going to allow Mexicans to be murdered—and not just Mexicans, but now Americans as well?

Now, with respect to the Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano has sent a bill or spoken to Congress with respect to the possibility of allowing U.S. agents to bear arms in our country—President Calderon has already answered this to a certain extent, but he's also said that he will be searching for mechanisms. What types of mechanisms can be found so as to keep them safe? And the people who murdered Zapata—well, in Mexican terms—Zapata, who was the alleged murderer of Zapata, the extradition of this man, of this alleged perpetrator has been requested. Madam Napolitano has mentioned this. President Calderon, how far are you going to go in those efforts? And there you would have my questions.

President Obama. Well, the second amendment in this country is part of our Constitution, and the President of the United States is bound by our Constitution. So I believe in the second amendment. It does provide for Americans the right to bear arms for their protection, for their safety, for hunting, for a wide range of uses. That does not mean that we cannot constrain gunrunners from shipping guns into Mexico. And so we believe that we can shape an enforcement strategy that slows the flow of guns into Mexico, while at the same time preserving our Constitution.

You asked whether I have veto power over a particular bill. I think that the challenge that we have right now is not a particular bill, but rather that we are trying to work our way through more effective enforcement mechanisms to prevent straw purchasers from buying caches of weapons, transporting them across the border.

We've made progress on that front, given the authority and administrative power that we already possess. We have seen a significant increase in the number of weapons that have been

confiscated. We have put more and more people behind bars for the transfer of weapons across the border into Mexico. We recognize that it's not enough and that we've got to do more.

Part of that job is to enforce the laws that are already on the books more effectively. Part of it may be to provide additional tools to law enforcement so that we can prevent the shipment of these weapons across the border.

But I do want to emphasize—and I emphasized this privately with President Calderon—we are very mindful that the battle President Calderon is fighting inside of Mexico is not just his battle; it's also ours. We have to take responsibility just as he's taking responsibility. And that's true with respect to guns flowing from north to south; it's true about cash flowing north to south. And so we've stepped up our enforcement and monitoring of bulk cash transfers across the borders that oftentimes finance these cartels.

So we're putting more and more resources into this. One of the things that I think that President Calderon and I have discussed is how we can strengthen border security on both sides, so that drugs flowing north or guns and cash flowing south, that we are able at all these points to intervene, interdict in a way that doesn't, on the other hand, slow the commerce and trade that is so important between our two countries.

It's a challenging task. We have a big border. We have a lot of people going back and forth. It's very important economically. But it is something that we have to continue to work on.

And I just want to say to all the people in the Mexican press that I have nothing but admiration for President Calderon and his willingness to take this on. The easy thing to do would be for him to ignore the corrosive, corrupting influence of these drug cartels within Mexico. That would be the easy thing to do. He's taking the hard path. And he's shown great courage and great risk in doing so.

And the United States will support him in any ways that we can in order to help him achieve his goals, because his goals are our goals as well. And they should be the goals of the Mexican people, because the notion that you would want these drug cartels to become more and more powerful and have greater and greater influence in the political life and the economic life and the cultural life of your country, I think, is something that nobody would want.

With respect to arming our agents, I think President Calderon was very clear. There are laws in place in Mexico that say that our agents should not be armed. The relationship that we have is, as President Calderon described it: When it comes to our partnership, our cooperation in battling the drug cartels, our job is to help with information, it's to help with equipment, it's to help in coordination. We are in an advisory capacity; we do not carry out law enforcement activities inside of Mexico.

What we can do is to make sure that our cooperation is strengthened and deepened and becomes more effective over time. And we're constantly refining how we do that in a way that is respectful of Mexico's sovereignty. And obviously, I'm concerned about our own agents who are down there. And so I assure you that we will be examining all our procedures and protocols in terms of how our agents travel throughout Mexico. And we'll be working in close contact with Mexican law enforcement, who I'm sure will have important advice in terms of how we operate in that region.

But this cooperation has made great progress. We expect it to continue to make more progress in the future.

President Calderon. I'd like to thank President Obama for this wonderful support in terms of weapons. Others have made similar efforts before his administration in terms of deterring the flow of weapons to Mexico, but we know that what has to do with internal homeland security and the Attorney General are making important efforts and we know that even more weapons traffickers, gunrunners, have been caught than ever before.

There's a great deal that has to be improved in terms of how to share information, how to trace the weapons. And I also recognize, as I said, the efforts, knowing the large restrictions that President Obama and his administration have at a political level. They're making great efforts internally so that through administrative measures we can broach this matter.

One of the things that I suggested during our conversation—and I think we still have to look at this very carefully—is if we can find a means of sealing ports of entry along the border. As the President said and as I said, through the use of nonintrusive mechanisms for detection, we could assuredly have the safe and secure border that both nations want, that both peoples want. We all want to have a safe border. I believe it's possible, although it will require huge technological and financial resources to achieve it. But I think it's a way of ensuring security without affecting the second amendment rights of U.S. citizens, and at the same time stop the flow of drugs northbound, monies and guns southbound.

I would insist upon the legal restrictions that exist in Mexico as in other countries with respect to intervention and the bearing of arms by U.S. agents. But on this subject, I'll have to speak to members of Congress, particularly the Senate, to explore different alternatives. And I think we have to look at all alternatives that are enabled to us by the Constitution and the law, mechanisms of protection—special mechanisms of protection, clear delineation of the areas where we can collaborate, for instance.

The criminals themselves, they tell us that they didn't know that they were attacking U.S. agents in their attack, so it's not that that's what they wanted to do. But I think at any rate this is still a very important sign—a warning sign to all of us where we have to be—indicating that we have to be very careful about how we care for all of our agents—not just Mexican, American—all agents. We have to have a specific policy that's much more daring in this sense.

And I think that here, not just in terms of weapons, guns, we have to think in a much more open manner and seek much more creative solutions. It seems to me that we are experiencing extraordinary circumstances that call for extraordinary actions by our Governments.

Now, with respect to the extradition of this criminal, it's something that we hadn't really discussed. I don't know if President Obama wanted to discuss this. We still have not finished our meetings yet. But—although we have to review what the law stipulates in terms of the extradition for each case of it, I'm, in truth, very convinced that these cases have to be brought to trial. There is the political will, full political will, that this individual be brought to justice with the full weight of the law, whether that be in the United States or in Mexico, if the law allows it. In terms of a request for extradition, I'd have to reserve my opinion in this sense because it will depend on what the law stipulates in this sense. Of course there is a political will to cooperate in this matter as well as on many others.

President Obama. I didn't comment on the extradition issue. Let me just emphasize [that]* we have made a request for extradition [intend to seek the extradition of those involved].* I think beyond that it's probably not appropriate to comment. Okay? But we expect the full weight of the law to be brought against this perpetrator.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 1:17 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Col. Muammar Abu Minyar al-Qadhafi, leader of Libya; Mark Sanchez, quarterback, New York Jets; and Julian Zapata Espinoza, the suspected gunman in the death of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Special Agent Jaime Zapata. President Calderon referred to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the 16th session, which was held in Cancun, Mexico, from November 19 through December 10, 2010, and the 17th session, which is scheduled to meet in Durban, South Africa, from November 28 through December 9. President Calderon spoke in Spanish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Mexico, President Calderon.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Calderon Hinojosa, Felipe de Jesus; Kirk, Ronald; LaHood, Raymond H.; Qadhafi, Muammar Abu Minyar al-; Sanchez, Mark; Zapata Espinoza, Julian; Zapata, Jaime; Zavala Gomez del Campo, Margarita Esther.

Subjects: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC); Civil rights : Firearm rights; Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G-20) nations; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Drug abuse and trafficking : Addiction treatment and reduction efforts; Drug abuse and trafficking : Education and prevention efforts; Egypt : Relations with U.S.; Egypt: Democracy efforts; Employment and unemployment : Job creation and growth; Employment and unemployment : Undocumented workers, reduction and prevention efforts; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Gulf of Mexico : Oil and gas exploration; Haiti : Earthquake, damage and recovery efforts; Homeland Security, Department of : Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); Immigration and naturalization : Illegal immigration; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; Latin America: Security cooperation with U.S.; Law enforcement and crime : Illegal arms trade, reduction efforts; Libya : Democracy efforts; Libya : Evacuation of foreign nationals; Libya : Human rights issues; Libya : International assistance; Libya : Political unrest and violence; Libya : U.S. economic sanctions; Libya :: Political unrest and violence; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Border with U.S., infrastructure and security; Mexico : Counternarcotics efforts, cooperation with U.S.; Mexico : Crime and narcotrafficking; Mexico : Cross-border trucking agreement with U.S., proposed; Mexico : Energy cooperation with U.S.; Mexico : President; Mexico : Regulatory cooperation and harmonization with U.S.; Mexico : relations with U.S.; Mexico : Trade with U.S.; Mexico: Energy, alternative and renewable sources and technologies; North American Treaty Organization; Sports : Football; ; Immigration and naturalization : Reform; ; Mexico : Relations with U.S.; Trade Representative, Office of the U.S. : U.S. Trade Representative; Transportation, Department of : Secretary;

* White House correction.

Tunisia : Democracy efforts; Tunisia : Relations with U.S.; United Nations : Framework Convention on Climate Change; United nations : Human Rights Council.

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